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BELGIAN STRIKE HAS BASIS IN LONGSTANDING ECONOMIC GRIEVANCES

Belgium has been gripped for the past four weeks in the severest popular upheaval the country has known since the "royal question" led to violence in 1950 and the subsequent abdication of King Leopold III. Since December 20, 1960, economic activity has been disrupted by strikes of workers belonging to Socialist labor unions protesting austerity measures contained in the government's Omnibus Bill for economic expansion and reform. While the major parties agree that reforms are urgently needed, they differ on solutions to the problem. Although Socialist leadership initially opposed a national strike, it was forced to support the movement that snowballed rapidly into widespread strife. There is no evidence that the small Communist party has exerted any effective leadership in the strike action. The long duration of the strike, with growing bitterness on both sides, has aggravated ever-present regional antagonism and is seriously threatening to split the Belgian Socialist party. An early dissolution of parliament and general elections appear likely in the near future.

Socialist Unions Protest Austerity Provisions of Omnibus Bill for Economic Reform

Economic activity in Belgium has been disrupted since December 20, 1960, by strikes of workers belonging to Socialist labor unions in protest against Parliamentary consideration of the Catholic-Liberal government's Omnibus Bill (Loi unique) for economic expansion and reform. While the opposition Socialist Party (PSB) agrees there is need for expansion and reform of

This report was prepared, on the basis of information available, on January 13, 1961.

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